



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Valerie Ervin

January 16, 2013

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Governor O'Malley Recommends Expanding 'Maryland Meals for Achievement' by Including Additional \$1.8 Million in FY14 State Budget, as Requested by Montgomery Councilmember Ervin and Coalition of Elected Leaders

*Councilmember Ervin Applauds Governor O'Malley's
Commitment to Increasing Universal Breakfast for Students*

ROCKVILLE, Md., January 16, 2013—Montgomery County Councilmember Valerie Ervin, who chairs the Council's Education Committee, worked with members of the Maryland General Assembly, the Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger and Share Our Strength's No Kind Hungry Campaign to advocate for expanded funding for the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) Program, which Governor Martin O'Malley included in his recommended Fiscal Year 2014 State Budget that was released today.

Governor O'Malley's recommended budget contains an additional \$1.8 million in the FY14 Maryland State Department of Education budget to fund universal breakfast. This means an additional 56,896 children in Maryland could receive the benefit in schools across Maryland.

"I have been working on this issue for years, and I was ecstatic when I heard that Governor O'Malley had included the additional funding that we had advocated for in the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program," said Councilmember Ervin. "This is another example of how Governor O'Malley continues to provide the building blocks necessary for the success of our children."

Maryland Meals for Achievement is a national model for increasing access to the School Breakfast Program (SBP), with proven links to improved educational performance, health and behavior. It allows schools that have at least 40 percent of their student population

eligible for free or reduced-price meals (FARMS) to provide universal, in-classroom breakfast.

Councilmember Ervin joined with the Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Campaign and members of the Montgomery and Prince George's Delegations to the General Assembly in a letter advocating for the increased funding. Every member of the Montgomery County Delegation and nearly all of the Prince George's County Delegation signed onto the request.

In December, State Senator Jamie Raskin and Delegate Susan Lee from Montgomery County, Delegate Aisha Braveboy from Prince George's County and Board of Education President Chris Barclay joined Councilmember Ervin at Roscoe Nix Elementary School in Silver Spring to highlight the importance of the universal breakfast program for students.

"Providing nutritious meals is one of the most immediate and cost-effective ways to improve a child's health and performance in the classroom," said Councilmember Ervin.

In MMFA schools, such as Roscoe Nix Elementary, the average participation in school breakfast is close to 70 percent. That is significantly higher than school breakfast participation in non-MMFA schools. Low-income children are at great risk of experiencing food insecurity, and often, the meals that they do receive outside of a structured program lack the vitamins and nutrients essential for their development. The lack of good nutrition can have a dramatic impact on student achievement.

"The groundswell of support from elected officials illustrates how much of an impact this program has on the lives of children," said Councilmember Ervin. "I am thankful for the many partners we have at the federal and state levels to support summer food and universal breakfast in Montgomery County, and I am extremely hopeful that the General Assembly will fund the Governor's recommendation in the budget."

In Montgomery County, more than one out of every seven children is at risk of hunger. Over the last three academic years, the number of children qualifying for free or reduced-price meals in the county has increased more than 25 percent with more than 47,000 children now falling below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Currently, Montgomery County has more than 80 schools that meet the criteria to participate in MMFA, but because of funding levels, only 40 schools are benefiting from the program this school year.

Governor O'Malley is known for his commitment to ending childhood hunger in Maryland. Through the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland and the dedicated support of Share Our Strength's national No Kid Hungry Campaign, Gov. O'Malley, over the course of his administration, has proven to be a staunch champion for children struggling with hunger. His commitment is vital in the fight to ensure that all of the nearly 237,000 Maryland children at risk of hunger have the foundation for a bright and healthy future.

NOTE: Letters sent to the Governor and State Superintendent of Schools Lowery are attached.

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